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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the content of a subculture in an organization, that of the faculty of a public middle school. The paper tries to articulate the substance of the subculture and to discover its sources in the shared experience of the teachers and in the way in which they wove that experience into a coherent and satisfying pattern of meaning. That pattern of meaning was shaped by the values and understandings of reality which are part of American culture generally; this small subculture existed within the context of that larger culture. It also existed within the context of the subculture of teaching as an occupation. The subculture was not fully shared by all of the faculty. Other subcultures to which various members belonged (e.g., gender, race), seemed to explain the variation in their attachment to the local faculty culture and their slightly different versions of it. The paper therefore explores the intersection of subcultures from the rest of the society with that in the organization. (JD)

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SOURCES OF WORKERS' SUBCULTURES IN ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL FACULTY

by

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SOURCES OF WORKERS' SUBCULTURES IN ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL FACULTY

Recent study of culture in organizations has stressed the development of a single culture for a whole organization. Much less attention has been paid to subcultures which vary among the subunits of an organization. There have been only a few studies of such subcultures in the recent literature stimulated by the current interest in organizational culture (e.g. Gregory, 1983; Riley, 1983). There is, however, a long, if sparse, tradition of such studies which extends back to the early days of the institutional school of organizational analysis, the school which is the forerunner of the current interest in overall organizational culture (Perrow, 1979, Peters and Waterman, 1982). Studies such as those by Gouldner (1954), Blau (1963), and Crozier (1964) as well as the Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1948) established the existence and importance of subcultures within organizations developed among a group who work together or do similar work.

Before proceeding very far with a study of culture, one must ask what one means by the term. Anthropologists do not seem to have been able to reach agreement on its meaning despite its centrality to their field (Geertz, 1973; Sanday, 1979; Smirich, 1983). I will not attempt to settle the issue of what culture is amidst such disagreement, but, for the purposes of this paper, I mean by culture more than a cognitive map or set of rules for communication and behavior. It is also a system of meanings which includes values and interpretations. It is tacit, not explicit, and it need not be logically consistent. It shapes perceptions, so that it may lead persons to ignore or to perceive differently what is "obvious" to outsiders and perhaps even to themselves in certain contexts.

Subcultures in the smaller units of an organization grow up in response to the shared experiences which persons have in these settings. Together people who share these experiences work out a way of making sense of them and a way of relating to one another and to the larger organization or to customers or clients which provides them some satisfaction. They do this over a considerable period of time and without conscious plan or design, however.

It is important that as they create and sustain a subculture, members of such work-based subcultures are simultaneously members of other subcultures in the society. They belong to the overall organization and whatever culture it may have; they belong to an occupation which may have a subculture; they belong to ethnic groups; they belong to a social class; they have a gender identity which entails a distinctive cultural perspective. They also belong to their overall societal culture which provides a context of meaning for all the smaller subcultures of which they are a part. Some of the subcultures to which members of a work group belong are nested within one another; for example all the members of a workgroup may be members of the same occupation and share its general cultural outlook. But members of a work group may also belong to other crosscutting subcultures, for example ethnic or gender subcultures. Differing perspectives arising from these different cultural experiences and allegiances may decrease the unity and force of the work group's subculture.

As the current spate of books which deal with the subject of managing culture

proclaim, the cultural perspectives of organization members are not simply abstractly interesting phenomena but have profound implications for their actions as agents of the organization. Organizational subcultures can easily have values at odds with those of management, or even take as a highly valued activity the frustration of at least some managerial intentions and the subtle bedevilment of its representatives. From the point of view of a manager, then, cultures within an organization are extremely important because their adherents interpret all the goals, rules, and hierarchical commands of the organization through the filter of the subculture. If a manager wants the messages of the larger organization to be understood and acted upon in the way he or she desires, it is important to understand the subcultures which will shape organization members' interpretation of them. If a subculture has values which are opposed to management goals or unrelated to them, the manager may want to understand the culture and its sources well enough to attempt to change it. Such an understanding of the perspective of work groups in the organization may also lead managers to a better comprehension of the work in which the organization is engaged and to some modification in the values and procedures which they endorse.

This paper analyzes the content of a subculture in an organization, that of the faculty of a public middle school. The paper tries to articulate the substance of the subculture and to discover its sources in the shared experience of the teachers and in the way in which they had woven that experience into a coherent and satisfying pattern of meaning. That pattern of meaning was shaped by the values and understandings of reality which are part of American culture generally; this small subculture existed within the context of that larger culture. It also existed within the context of the subculture of teaching as an occupation. The subculture was not fully shared by all of the faculty. Other subcultures to which various members belonged seemed to explain the variation in their attachment to the local faculty culture and their slightly different versions of it. The paper therefore explores the intersection of subcultures from the rest of the society with that in the organization.

The subculture of this school faculty led its members to act against the desires of their organizational superordinates and against the interests of their clients. Their behavior surely perverse to organizational managers and even to this observer—who in the same study saw other school faculties handle more difficult student bodies with far more good humor and adaptability. But, if one looked at the Mann teachers' behavior with an empathetic eye, seeking for a cultural pattern, their behavior made sense and was no longer perverse. It was an understandable response to others' behavior toward them. It was guided by a pattern of meaning which incorporated the values of the larger society, of the teaching occupation, and of the gender and ethnic groups to which the leaders belonged.

The case discussed in this paper is in some ways special among organizations because of the character of public schools. Frequently strong union contracts make it nearly impossible not only to dismiss teachers, but even to transfer them from school to school. Thus the principal, as manager of the school, had to work with a faculty most of whom had long experience together and whose collective perspective could not be changed by scattering the individuals to different units of the organization. This kind of rigidity does not exist in every organization, but it does exist in many.

Further, schools are organizations with extraordinarily short career ladders for the vast majority of employees. Thus the hope of being promoted into management, which works as a socializing force toward sharing the managerial perspective for employees in many organizations, does not affect most teachers. Though teachers are educated, in some sense professional, workers they remain a group with a separate identity and a separate future from school administrators. Like the stable composition of the faculty, this special characteristic of schools is shared with many other kinds of organizations. Still, the reader should be warned that these two influences foster the development of a separate shared collective perspective more than do the working conditions of some other kinds of work groups in organizations.

FACULTY CULTURE AT HORACE MANN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Horace Mann Middle School is located in the city of Heartland, one of the nation's thirty-five largest cities. It is an industrial city in the midwest. As part of its response to a court order to desegregate its schools in the mid-1970s, Heartland established a set of magnet schools which draw students on a voluntary basis from all over the city. Admission is governed by quotas for race and sex. In order to make the schools attractive to volunteers, each magnet school is given a special educational approach or program. Horace Mann Middle School is a school for the gifted and talented.

I studied Horace Mann in the 1979-1980 school year, its third year as a school for the gifted and talented and its second of operation as a full program with grades 6 through 8. The study was part of a larger study of three magnet middle schools in Heartland (Metz, forthcoming). At each of the three schools I observed in classrooms and halls and in other school gathering places and meetings. I interviewed students, teachers, administrators, and a few parents. I studied documents of many kinds. The purpose was to describe the kinds of experiences the adults offered to the students, and to understand what influences led to the constellation that emerged. Faculty culture turned out to be one important influence at each school. I was present at Mann one or two days a week through most of the fall semester, concentrating especially on the sixth grade as the sixth graders became acquainted with the school. I was present intensively several days a week from March to the middle of June, concentrating on the seventh and eighth grade teachers and classes. I was present at parent meetings of various kinds throughout the 1979-1980 year and on an intermittent basis in the previous year as well.

The School's History

Horace Mann Middle School for the Gifted and Talented was deeply affected by its history. It was founded on the initiative of parents of children at the Peach Street Elementary School for the Gifted and Talented who wanted an extension of the gifted and talented program into the middle school years. They asked the Heartland school board to locate the new middle school in the Atlantic Avenue

Junior High School building. Atlantic Avenue was an inner city school serving a poor and black student body with a reputation for low academic performance and hostile behavior. The board thought few would mourn its passing as a neighborhood school and agreed. Because of union rules the Atlantic faculty became the faculty of the new program. During the first year, 1977-1978, there were only 70 seventh graders in the gifted and talented program while neighborhood eighth graders finished their experience at the school.

The school board abruptly transferred the program including students and faculty to the Horace Mann High School in the August preceding the following year, which was to be the school's first as a school solely for the gifted and talented. There the middle school shared the building with a new magnet high school for college bound students. The principal of the high school had responsibility for both programs though an assistant principal was designated Administrator in Charge of the middle school. The study was conducted during the school's second year in the Horace Mann building.

Half of the students in the program came from the Peach Street elementary program for the gifted and talented which started at the third grade. These children and new entrants at the middle school level were identified as gifted and talented by their previous classroom teachers. The criteria were those promulgated by the (then) Department of Health Education and Welfare which include not only general or specific intellectual abilities but outstanding achievement or potential in leadership, visual or performing arts, or psychomotor ability. Before entrance, at the end of the fifth grade, three quarters of Mann's seventh graders had scored above the median in national tests of reading and mathematical achievement in comparison to one third of city students as a whole. Half scored in the top quarter compared to a national sample. However, in this group of "gifted and talented" students one quarter scored below the national median on these skills. These students were a selected group compared to the students of the city, but they were nonetheless academically diverse. At least one fourth were presumably picked for talents which were not verbal or mathematical—or they were inaccurately placed. Except for a very few classes, as in most Heartland magnet schools, students were grouped heterogeneously in academic skills lest homogeneous classes resegregate them by race.

The Faculty's Behavior and Beliefs

Gifted and talented education is not a well-defined entity. It may include both enrichment and acceleration or either alone. According to central office directives, Mann Middle School was supposed to stress enrichment as it was created to extend the enriched, but not accelerated, Peach Street elementary program for the gifted and talented into the middle school years. However, it was pulled toward acceleration by the example within its own building of Mann High School for the College Bound which frankly emphasized acceleration and high academic standards in traditional work. There were parents who preferred each of the two alternatives.

The behavior of the majority of Mann's teachers in the classroom reflected neither an enriched nor an accelerated approach. Most teachers taught classes as they are taught in traditional junior high schools. Activities were standard ones

with little enriching variation from routine. Teachers used lecture, recitation, and seatwork from texts, workbooks, and worksheets as the primary classroom activities. Occasionally the routine of the class was varied with a filmstrip or a trip to the school library. Acceleration was not possible since the whole class, even though heterogeneously composed, worked on a single task whether the task involved recitation, individual seatwork, or homework. Non-academic classes also followed patterns traditional for those subjects in the junior high school with the whole class working on a standard task, though sometimes tasks such as the making of a garment or the creation of a piece of art with a certain theme or set of materials allowed for individual variation. A few individual teachers developed patterns which allowed the whole group to engage in more varied activities or allowed individuals to work independently and so at different rates.[1]

When teachers were asked what they did differently because Horace Mann was a gifted and talented school, many replied that good teaching is the same in any school. The following answer is representative:

> There was an inservice class...that first year, but I couldn't take it because I had a time conflict. But I don't think there is much need for it. As far as I'm concerned kids are kids and they need structure. They need the basic fundamentals. You find out what they know and what they need to learn from there and then you start teaching that.

When teachers were asked in an interview how they would run a gifted and talented school if they could set one up free from the constraints of the present setting, the most common response was that they would screen children carefully and identify their talents clearly. They implied that adequate selection of outstandingly gifted and talented students and labeling at entrance were both necessary and sufficient for a gifted and talented program.

One teacher expressed the philosophy which lay behind much of this response when he was asked how he would run a school for the gifted and talented:

> He said first of all you should have children who are really gifted and talented. And then secondly you should be able to group them. Grouping should not be a bad word. . . . They ought to be able to be grouped together to go as fast as they can go in math. And if a child is talented in music, he ought to be with other people who are talented in music. . . . He said that teaching for the gifted and talented is simply good teaching.

These teachers were responding to pressures from administrators and parents to do something special to make the program for gifted and talented children distinctive. They insisted that the distinctiveness of such a program lay in being able to work with distinctive groups of children. The teaching to be done did not change. In short any deficiencies in the program lay in the selection and grouping of children, not in their teaching.

The teachers were also vehement in saying that the selection and grouping of the children in the school was inadequate. They insisted over and over that the

children were "average", an ordinary group of children. This statement stuck out as an item of subcultural belief because it was so frequently repeated and because it violated common sense from an outsider's perspective in the light of the striking disparity between the fifth grade test scores of Mann's students and those of fifth graders in the city as a whole. If Mann's students were not all clearly gifted and talented, three quarters were above the national median in crucial basic skills and virtually all were above the city median which fell at about the thirty-third percentile nationally. Further, teachers' statements about the "average" student body contradicted their own complaints in other contexts that because of the diversity of the student body they had to teach to the middle and ignore the needs of the most gifted or talented students. A new teacher in an academic subject who had wholeheartedly adopted the perspective of the continuing faculty articulated these themes in a spring interview.

> There's very little difference between our student body, as I perceive it, and any other middle school that I know of. We do have kids who have outstanding talents in areas of music and art, but I don't see that in any greater proportion than I did anywhere else that I have ever taught [a lower class black and a middle class white high school in Heartland].
>
> Perhaps the basic skill areas, like the reading levels, are generally higher than some other places. . . . I have a few [seventh grade] kids that read at the 4th or 5th grade level, but those are fairly rare. Most of the kids are within a grade level or so of their current assignment. . . .
>
> Their behavior is generally better. . . . But in the classroom—the quality of work that they do—the whole range is there. There are kids who could be doing beginning college work all the way down to the kids who can barely cope with what we are doing on a day to day basis.

The first statement that the Mann student body was like any other student body seems striking in the context of the Heartland schools where this teacher had prior experience. There were vast differences in test scores between the lower class black schools and the middle class white schools before desegregation, which this teacher could hardly have failed to notice in her previous experience. Further, the test scores of Mann's students were so far above the city average that it seems an experienced academic teacher would have difficulty not noticing the difference between this group and others, unless she were seeing their performance through the veil of a cultural interpretation which stressed their similarity to others.

This teacher clearly contradicts herself in saying that the students are all working within a grade level of the seventh grade where they are placed and then two paragraphs later (in the full transcript) saying that they range from being ready for college work (the thirteenth grade) to very low. The first statement, that they are average, was a theme which justified giving them average teaching. The second statement showed that the teachers were working under adverse

conditions in trying to cope with "the whole range". The Mann faculty seemed to be saying that in either of these contradictory states a teacher could not be asked to produce teaching of any very special or distinguished kind.

As the teachers understood their situation, they could not begin to develop a gifted and talented program unless they had all gifted students and unless students were grouped homogeneously according to their gifts in each subject. They felt helpless and misused in the face of expectations that they develop a special program without these arrangements. The faculty held that they were doing the best that could be expected, considering the students they were given. The faculty were saying in effect, "We are good teachers, but what can you do with these students?"

Teachers were critical not only of the screening of the students but also of the administrators. They resented the move into the Mann high school building where many felt their school took second place to the high school program. They were quick to tell the latest story of some obstacle they had encountered or some administrative detail that had gone awry. They proclaimed that when they had inventive ideas these were vetoed by the Adminstrator in Charge or bogged down in logistical difficulties or administrative inaction. Some teachers said explicitly that they had decided there was nothing they could do under this administration; they were simply putting in time until the school could be moved out of the builidng and could have its own administration.[2]

A pall of resentment hung in the air around the faculty. It became palpable in little matters. For example, the teachers seemed poised to leave the building at the first legal moment at the end of each day. They sat in stony silence and refused to give a polite chuckle in response to the Administrator in Charge's pleasantries in faculty meetings. In research interviews many not only expressed anger and frustration, but seemed to take a perverse pleasure in recounting the difficulties which were placed in their paths.

Even when teachers were encouraged to take some initiative in defining and developing the program, they tended to resist doing so on the grounds that such development was primarily an administrative responsibility. One teacher expressed this view very explictly in an interview.

> Ms. Wilhelm: It's just that there's a lot of vagueness surrounding this whole concept of gifted and talented and...there just does not seem to be much exploring of that. You know the administration and teachers together—there isn't much leadership there in developing just what the program is supposed to be. . . .
>
> One of our tasks [in team meetings of teachers who teach academic subjects to the same grade] was to be exploring that. It's as if we have been given the task of trying to define and put into words what they haven't been able to tell us. It's as if the program has been established without a clear philosophy or clear view and clear sense of what this whole thing is supposed to be about. Which is really kind of a futile thing to do. You establish a program and then try to figure out what it is. We haven't made any progress on

that. There isn't enough dialogue going on between all the people that need to be involved.

Interviewer: And who would need to be involved?

Ms. Wilhelm: I think certainly the administrators would need to be involved.

From an outsiders' perspective there was some basis for this teacher's statement. But one has to understand it somewhat differently upon learning that informal leaders in the team of which she was a member had, according to some teachers present, responded to the Administrator in Charge's meeting with them on these issues by ostentatiously grading papers while he spoke or insisting that they deal with an agenda of internal, and nonpressing, matters on the day that he was present. The Administrator in Charge stopped meeting with this team. The teacher's complaint would also have seemed more reasonable had the teachers been asked to develop a full program from the ground up. It seems less reasonable in the light of the rather small changes, such as cooperative student projects, or nontraditional instructional techniques which the administrators suggested they consider. One must also remember the refusal of most teachers to participate in inservice courses or week end and university courses in gifted and talented education for which the school system would in many cases have paid tuition. Finally, the statement is quite striking in the context of studies of implementation of educational innovations which stress that teachers have their own agendas for reform and like to be given an opportunity to shape the innovative practices they are asked to implement (e.g. Deal and Nutt, 1983; Sarason, 1971; Sussmann, 1977). This teacher's team was given an opportunity to play a part in shaping the character of the school's innovation and refused to contribute ideas on the grounds that the generation of such ideas was an administrative responsiblity.

In short, since the teachers' position here does not seem to make common sense from an outsider's perspective, one is alerted to look for a subcultural perspective from which it does make sense. The teachers at Mann seemed to be saying not only, "We are good teachers, but what can you do with these students?" but also, "We are good teachers, but what can you do with this administration?" They were making this point with such seriousness that it inhibited them from taking initiative to shape the program. They protected their belief in the first half of the statement, "We are good teachers..." by demonstrating the force of the constraints in the second half through actions which showed that "there is nothing you can do with this administration [or these students]."

Variation Among the Mann Faculty

Although I have spoken of the teachers as one group in the forgoing description, there were variations among them. Most strikingly, there were some new teachers, who had joined the faculty after the move to Mann, who did not share either the behavior or the attitudes of the majority. It was almost solely these teachers who pursued non-traditional activities, even such small departures as classroom discussion in other than a question and answer format. These new teachers found the student body more stimulating than frustrating and they were far less critical of the administrators than the teachers who had come from Atlantic. There were only a

few such teachers, however, and they did not form a group of their own but remained individuals with their attention and efforts centered in their own classrooms.

Two or three new teachers became assimilated to the dominant faculty culture and were some of its most expressive proponents, for example Ms. Wilhelm who was quoted earlier. The teachers who were recruited in this way all were in situations which put them in intensive contact with core members of the continuing faculty, and most of them had, for various reasons, been very unhappy to be placed at Mann.

The black teachers were also a distinctive group. They were diverse in apparent social background, in personality, and in pedagogical style, but they still had some social solidarity and some common perspectives centered around the issue of race. They were angry that the weakest students were nearly all black and that more vigorous efforts were not made to recruit and admit the more able black students whom they felt sure were available. The fact that the white teachers did not mention that the weakest students were black, while the black teachers did, suggests that the white teachers' objection to academic heteogeneity was in part an objection to racial heterogeneity which they, unlike the black teachers, saw as implying a student body which was not uniformly gifted.

The white men and the white women who had had experience at Atlantic Avenue also differed from each other, but in more subtle ways. It was the white men who formed the dominant core group of the faculty. This core was led by a group of white men who constituted one department and who all had started together at Atlantic Avenue ten years prior to the study. It was they who most fully exemplified what I called the faculty culture in the last section.

The white women from Atlantic Avenue also expressed negative feelings about the school. But they were more sympathetic with the administrators despite some specific criticisms of particular policies or actions. They also spoke about their relations with the administration in quite a different way from the men, a pattern which will be explored below.

The differences among the faculty help to highlight the sources of the subculture of the dominant group whose behavior and values I have already described. The cultural determinants of their behavior become clearer when it is possible to contrast their behavior with that of persons in the same situation within the organization who behaved differently.[3] Because of limitations of space, in the rest of the paper I will explore in depth only the subculture of the dominant group of faculty who were predominantly male and all white. I will explore the attitudes and behavior of others as a source of perspective on the culture of this majority. The contrast will also show the importance of individuals' simultaneous participation in several subcultures.

SOURCES OF FACULTY CULTURE AT MANN

Continuity with the Past

One noticeable key to the sources of the faculty culture was the different perspective of new teachers—except those who were angry to be at the school and who were intensively socialized through close contact with teachers who had been at Atlantic. The culture seemed to have originated at Atlantic; new teachers had not had the experience in which it had grown up. A few of the white teachers who talked about their collective past at Atlantic Avenue provided some insight into the historical roots of the faculty culture. One of the white women from Atlantic Avenue described her experience there in vivid terms. She could not understand why the dominant group of teachers were so negative about their present situation because to her it seemed a vast improvement over Atlantic.

> Interviewer: What was Atlantic like before the change [to a magnet program]?
>
> Ms. Rohr: That's a funny thing. This is just like you've died and gone to heaven. I don't understand why a teacher would moan and groan and complain and say that it is such hell here.
>
> I spent ten years at that hellhole, and there is just no describing it unless you've taught in an inner city junior high school with seventh, eighth, and ninth graders. We had ninth graders that were eighteen years old. In its real heyday, we had two and three fires a day, constant false alarms, horrible vandalism, fights. I couldn't count the number of knives and junk that I saw in my classroom in ten years. I mean there's no comparison. Teacher assaults, you know, teachers knocked in the face and the mouth, in the eyes, knifings. Two art teachers I know were knifed. I mean just gross, gross misconduct and horrible, horrible behavior. For a few years there the kids were right off the walls.

Though emotion may have led this teacher to exaggerate, her comments are consistent with the reputation of Atlantic Avenue in the city. It was clearly a school where the kind of opposition which can develop between poorly achieving working class and minority students and their teachers (Hargreaves, 1967; Metz, 1983; Schwartz, 1981) was in full flower.

One of the white men from Atlantic who was not socially close to the other white men and did not share their degree of discontent with Mann articulated the feelings which the experience of teaching the students at Atlantic engendered in him with unusual frankness.

> Mr. Selig: At Atlantic I probably didn't smile at all. Maybe until February. And you really almost had to do that for survival. . . . Teachers didn't have as much authority. After a while you really lost your sense of self-worth, you really did.

Interviewer: Tell me some more about that.

Mr. Selig: Well I just simply felt that—I realized I had a family and that they had to be fed. I really hadn't been trained for anything else besides teaching. And I simply went to work every day. Tried to do the best I could and it really didn't bother me whether a student got this or a student got that. It didn't bother me. I'd just go and do my job. . . .

At Atlantic you almost think that what the kids are doing to you is a personal affront. You know, you tend to get extremely angry. It takes a long time to get over that, to realize that the kids aren't really angry at you. They really aren't striking out at you as an individual. It takes a long time. . . . Cause I'm telling you a lot of times you can go home and start qustioning your own values. You start stereotyping. It's really shameful how you lose all that self-respect and idealism.

Another white man from Atlantic Avenue who was active in the core group and a member of the core department clearly still felt the anger Mr. Selig said it took him so long to get over. He described a similar process of withdrawal from caring how much the students learned:

"If kids are all the time fighting in class and calling you names and so on, when its time for your prep period or you go home at night, you don't spend your time thinking up nice little activities for those children. It's sort of as though—well I guess every child deserves a good education—but it's as though, 'If you don't respect me and what I have done for you, why should I do this for you?'"

All of these white teachers suggest that conflict between students and teachers was high at the old Atlantic Avenue school and that teachers responded to feelings of rage and frustration with withdrawal. Of the three teachers only Mr. Selig saw that the students might have some reason for their behavior. It is certainly likely that teachers' withdrawal or anger contributed to students' hostility. But for our purposes, the important point is that the Atlantic faculty learned to support one another in seeing themselves as good teachers who could not display their abilities because the students were difficult. When they experienced new difficulties at Mann—even though it was a situation other teachers in the city envied—they continued to see themselves as good teachers who could not display their abilities because of the students they were given.

At Atlantic the teachers had also blamed the principal, in fact a succession of principals, for their own inability to be effective. The Atlantic principal had not been transferred with the program, and the teachers now spoke of him fairly kindly. But the same teacher who said that being at Mann was like having "died and gone to heaven" said with a laugh that she wished she "had had a tape recorder" when teachers who now complained about the Mann administrators had been talking about the Atlantic principal while they were there.

In summary, it appears that the white teachers at Atlantic found the students'

resistance to learning and their hostility a threat to their own image of themselves as effective teachers. In order to preserve their sense of competence, they became angry at the students and withdrew from any identification with them. They then could see themselves as competent persons in impossible circumstances. Criticism of administrators served the same self-image. When difficulties developed at Mann, they continued to see themselves as competent persons in impossible circumstances, making new administrators and a group of students who were not ideally selected for a gifted and talented program the source of their inability to show their true worth. In both situations they assumed that the locus of control of the situation was not with themselves, a more fundamental assumption and one less easily subject to examination than propositions about specific groups of students or administrators.

If one understands that the faculty who moved from Atlantic to Mann centered their understanding of the persons who participated in the school and of school practice around an attempt to maintain their pride in their professional abilities, then their puzzling behavior becomes understandable and consistent. Their deepest, most tacit, assumption was that good teaching is only possible when organizational conditions are favorable. Teachers can not control these conditions and they can only practise their craft effectively and demonstrate their own true worth under appropriate conditions. Without them, the best teachers can do is to engage in a holding action, to go through the motions of teaching without much hope of being effective. Their capabilities as teachers can not be assessed from their performance in such a holding action.

In this context, the teachers' refusal to cooperate with the administrators and to seek innovative teaching approaches in their classrooms were actions which confirmed their perspective that the school did not provide the conditions for teachers to demonstrate their true capacities. To have tried new approaches would have been to risk their reputations under circumstances which as they saw them ensured failure. Nonethelss, there were some interesting ways in which teachers did express their sense of being competent professionals in the present in the school. As a group they dressed extremely well. Most of the men wore ties and jackets and the women wore dresses and suits which would have been appropriate in downtown offices. They dressed more formally than other middle school faculties in the city; their dress proclaimed both their professionalism and their middle class status which their association with the old Atlantic students had called into question. Further, in some situations where teachers worked with groups composed only of very able students, in a few classes and in some extracurricular competitive teams with an academic character, teachers worked with a publicly visible energy and enthusiasm which they did not display in their regular classes.

Faculty Pride and Identification as "Inner City Teachers"

The strength of the teachers' feelings that they could not work effectively at Mann can not be fully understood from their daily encounters with students and administrators but must be understood in the larger context of the history of the way they were treated as they ceased to be the faculty Atlantic Avenue Junior High School and became the staff of a magnet school for the gifted and talented. The new situation offered almost as many assaults to their professional pride as had the old. The assaults simply came from new directions. First, it became clear that both the central office and the leading parents of gifted and talented

students mistrusted the Atlantic teachers' ability to deal effectively with gifted and talented students. In the year that the program functioned at Atlantic Avenue with seventy seventh graders while the rest of the school served remaining neighborhood students, a small group of teachers were chosen to teach the gifted and and talented students. Central office personnel and teachers from Peach Street worked intensively with the chosen teachers. Other teachers were literally forbidden to have any contact with the gifted students. They might help a colleague set up a lab or an art room, but they were expected to leave the room when the students entered. The teachers not chosen for the gifted and talented program took serious offense at this treatment. They made barbed jokes about "gifted and talented teachers" in the direction of their chosen colleagues. Always unspoken was the assumption that if some teachers were "gifted and talented" by association with their students, others were "inner city teachers" by association with theirs. When the whole student body was gifted and talented students in the next year, these excluded teachers became part of the gifted and talented faculty, but the stigma of their former students still clung to them.

The Administrator in Charge of the middle school at Mann told me that he considered one of his tasks to be "reawakening enthusiam for teaching" in the teachers who had been at Atlantic Avenue. He spoke of them as all in a category. Some parents were critical of the teachers from Atlantic, also as a category. They assumed that after dealing with a population of inner city students these teachers would be unprepared to work with "gifted and talented" students unless they received considerable special retraining and perhaps not even with such assistance. Both at full Parent-Teacher Organization meetings and in committees including staff and parents, some parents expressed themselves vehemently and unselfconsciously about what they perceived to be the incompetence of some teachers. Teachers could do little but silently listen to these attacks. Some parents also approached individual teachers with criticisms of their curriculum, classroom strategy, or grading.

The teachers from Atlantic Avenue thus found their pride assaulted, sometimes with brutal directness, by parents and by administrators. When these teachers maintained that good teaching is the same with all students they were in effect maintaining that they were perfectly qualified to teach gifted and talented students and not tainted or made incompetent by their years of contact with inner city students. When they claimed that they could not teach effectively with students as diverse as those in the program or with an administration which behaved as this one did they were defending their professional competence by saying they did not control the crucial conditions for their performance. The stance which had sheltered their pride in the face of angry students at Atlantic now sheltered it in the face of critical parents and administrators at Mann.

Teachers' Pride and Identity as Secondary Teachers

Several arrangements at Mann also constituted assaults on teachers' pride, especially male teachers' pride, because of their meaning within the structure of the occupation of teaching and the occupational subculture it has developed. Teaching is divided into elementary and secondary sectors. Training and certification are separate for the two. There are also differences in the meaning of teaching and in the roles of teachers and students. In oversimplified terms,

elementary teachers "teach children" while secondary teachers "teach subjects". A secondary teacher may identify himself as some one expert in a field who has chosen to teach it, while an elementary teacher identifies herself as some one who works with children through teaching them various subject matter. Elementary teachers are almost all women while secondary teachers are about evenly divided in terms of gender with males dominating the ethos of the occupation.

The grades encompassed at Mann occupy an ambiguous status with regard to this distinction. In most states they may be taught either by persons certified to teach the elementary grades or by persons certified to teach the sixth to twelfth or seventh to twelfth grades. The old Atlantic was nearly exclusively staffed with the latter group, secondary teachers who happened to have been assigned to a junior high school rather than a high school, a fact which was itself an initial assault to their professional status.

In the first year that the gifted and talented program was at Mann the whole Heartland school system changed from junior high schools organized around departments which offered a particular subject to middle schools organized around interdisciplinary grade level teams. This change was part of a national trend to make these middle years more like elementary school and less like high school. Department heads who had had some power and respect were abolished and replaced with a single curriculum co-ordinator who was to perform their functions for all subjects. Teachers were encouraged to think in terms of students' overall development rather than their progress in a single subject. This change was a blow to the Atlantic teachers' identification of themselves as secondary teachers expert in a subject. The change was an implicit demotion, particularly for the men, because of the association of elementary schools with younger children and with predominantly female staffs. Several of the men resisted this change all they could through noncooperation in interdepartmental teams.

The pains of being middle school teachers were made all the more keen by the school's location within the same building as a high school. When there was not enough of something to go around, whether it was thoroughly equipped science laboratories or a bulletin board to announce weekly school events, the high school had first claim because of its more complex academic program and its status as the main program in the building.

This situation was aggravated yet further by the formal definition of the gifted and talented program emphasizing enrichment which emanated from the Heartland School District's central office. In many respects Peach Street Elementary School was held up to Mann Middle School as a model of a successful enriched program, while Mann High School with which it shared the building stressed acceleration. In this context, emphasis on enrichment betokened a further infantilization of the program. Teachers whose pride of craft was associated with their status as secondary subject matter specialists maintained their identity by clinging to their accustomed styles of teaching which seemed more secondary than alternative methods designed for enrichment.

Teachers' Pride and the Administrative Hierarchy

The administrative structure of the school nettled the sensitive pride of the

Atlantic teachers. Although there were two schools in the Mann building, the Heartland School District has a policy that there may be only one principal in a building. Consequently there was a single principal for the two schools. The assistant principal who was designated Administrator in Charge of the middle school remained an assistant principal, clearly subject to the final authority of the principal. He also remained part of the high school administrative staff and occasionally had time consuming duties in that connection. When the middle school teachers wanted a decision or permission for some special activity, they had to deal with the Administrator in Charge, but often had to wait until he could check with the principal. Worse yet, he sometimes changed decisions, giving the appearance that he had been overruled from above. The sensitive middle school teachers felt that they had no access to the man at the top but were subject to a distant power, while the high school teachers were favored with direct access to the principal.

Further, the context of the school required the administrators to use their formal powers of direction to the limit. The logistical problems in launching two new schools in one building were awesome. In addition since both schools were magnet schools both were under obligation to offer distinctive and attractive programs to please volunteering parents and students from the moment that they opened. In this situation there was little opportunity for prolonged staff discussion of alternative options and for democratic development of program. The administrators felt obligated to make decisions unilaterally and to enforce them strongly. The principal, especially, was formal in his manner with teachers and unshakeable in his directives to them.

There were significant differences in the responses of the men and of the women who had previously taught at Atlantic to these administrative arrangements. The women spoke directly of the strong administrative structure and direction favored by the principal. They readily stated that the administrative arrangements and style of the school left them feeling unsupported in their efforts. Still they were able to take the point of view of the administrators. They recognized that the need to establish two programs with great speed led to their strong use of their authority and that the logistical complexity of running two programs in a single building led to many arrangements which were inconvenient for teachers. In interviews they spoke of having their feelings hurt and of sometimes feeling "like stepchildren", but they did not lay much personal blame on the administrators. Rather they spoke of enduring a difficult situation.

The men, on the other hand, did not mention the principal's strong use of authority in their interviews. Instead they complained of administrative irrationality and confusion. They spoke bitterly of the fact that the middle school's Administrator in Charge was subject to the principal and was without authority of his own. However they phrased these complaints as though his lack of control in the situation were a reflection of personal ineffectiveness rather than of his organizational position as an assistant principal, even though the specific issues of which they spoke were mostly reflections of that position. They implied that his role behavior was unmanly as they used words like "flunky" to describe his position. Their discussion of the administrators in general was acrid, personal, and accusatory as the women's was not.

A woman who worked with the informal leader of the white males in relatively close interaction with the principal during the first year described their interaction in a way which discloses the dynamics at work in the relationship of the white males as a group with the administration:

> Tom is a very aggressive, assertive person and Dr. Joliet [the principal] does not like any one who tells him how to run things. . . . Whenever he gets into a power struggle he has to win. And Tom would go in and say, 'I need this and this and this. I need two hours of secretarial time and these yellow file folders. I need it by noon tomorrow.'
>
> Dr. Joliet would say, 'Have you put in a work order for that? You know it's a little late to be asking for something that has to be done tomorrow. We don't have time to do that between now and tomorrow.' He would just constantly put Tom in his place.
>
> I think it was very much a male on male kind of thing. In fact one of the things I noticed was that most of the males in the middle school didn't like Dr. Joliet.

Although one must speculate a little to analyze the men's feelings because they did not express them directly, the following seems a likely interpretation. They could be expected to feel belittled by the strongly directive administrative structure of the school and the lack of resources resulting from logistical problems just as the women did. But as males they did not mention their feelings because in American culture it is considered unmanly to say one's feelings are hurt from being undervalued. In fact it throws doubt upon one's manhood to be undervalued in the first place, as it does not throw doubt upon one's womanhood. The aggressive behavior of the faculty leader was an attempt to assert both his own worth and that of his program. But since he behaved in a manner which appeared to initiate a power struggle, the principal was put in the position of having to "put Tom in his place" if he were to maintain the strongly hierachical role he needed to get the two schools launched in the distinctive styles that had been mandated. Thus the teacher's challenges called forth more of the very hierarchical command which had riled him and led to his challenges in the first place.

While this was clearly a struggle over the role relations of principal and teacher in a relationship where the extent of hierarchy is ambiguously defined (Bidwell, 1965; Hanson, 1981), the participants may well also have behaved with overtones of a struggle for dominance between males. The woman quoted who watched the interaction was sensitive to this dimension of the interaction but did not fully perceive its grounding in conflict over the definition of organizational, rather than personal, relationships. (The men by contrast may well not have been consciously aware of the tone of male contestation in their discussion which the woman heard; each would have phrased the particular conflict in terms of his need for secretarial time or for orderly procedure in the office.)

In this light one can argue that the male teachers' bitter description of the Administrator in Charge's subordinate position as assistant principal with terms suggesting a lack of manliness was an expression of their own feeling of being

unmanned by subordination. The Administrator in Charge was the symbolic respresentative of the whole middle school faculty; his clear subordination to the principal signified the subordination of the middle school faculty to the high school on the one hand and to the strong authority of the principal on the other.

In order fully to understand the meanings which were relevant here, one must understand something of the ambivalence toward authority which observers of American culture have remarked upon repeatedly ever since the days of de Tocqueville (Spindler and Spindler, 1983). While we accept the legitimacy of authority in principle, we are suspicious of it and often make cultural heroes of persons who ignore or defy it. Indeed such defiance is one strand in our conception of manliness. The behavior of Mann's male teachers, then, drew importantly from the uneasy feeling with which our national culture regards authority and from the subculture which we have cooperatively constructed for males.

It is reasonable to ask whether the male teachers had an especially strong need to defend their pride as males because their professional pride had been subjected to such strong assaults. Several studies have shown that when students fail in school they turn to expression of their adult gender roles and to exaggerated emphasis on manliness or femininity for solace (Bellaby, 1974; McRobbie, 1977; Stinchcombe, 1964; Willis, 1977). Teachers, or any adults who experience occupational failure, may similarly emphasize their private roles (Kanter, 1977). For the males at Mann this exaggerated emphasis on manliness made intensified bureaucratic subordination not an impersonal organizational matter but a galling insult to their personal pride.

As a consequence the men from Atlantic Avenue found their energies absorbed in opposing the administrators and in defending their accustomed teaching methods. The women, who could admit that their professional pride was hurt, could get some perspective on the impersonal sources of their difficulties and so were left with energies remaining. Though they were not a great deal more imaginative than the men in their teaching, it was they who took all the initiative which was taken to develop special projects through the teaching teams. Aside from trying to get team cooperation started, several of them attended courses and workshops on gifted and talented education on their own time which may have given them ideas for fresh approaches to classroom teaching in later years of the program.

The black teachers responded in ways which both paralleled and differed from the whites. All but one were women and all but one from Atlantic. They were subject to suspicion from white parents and white administrators both because they had taught at Atlantic and because they were black. With less social solidarity overall than the core of white men, they still came together in defending the interests of the black students and seeking a better means of selecting and attracting strong black students. As the white teachers doubted whether the new gifted and talented students needed distinctive teaching methods, several of these black teachers questioned the assumption of a significant difference between these new students and the neighborhood students at the old Atlantic. They argued that the old Atlantic students had also had gifts and talents which could be developed even if they had had fewer advantages. These teachers also questioned the moral virtue which white parents and administrators implicitly claimed for the gifted

white students.

Some black teachers saw the transformation of Atlantic Avenue into a magnet school primarily as a way to deprive black students and teachers together of a school in which they could have a feeling of ownership, while other black teachers saw Mann as an incompletely realized opportunity for broadening the horizons and increasing the life chances of able black students. These teachers seemed to vary in the degree of their own experience with whites, with the second group having more experience in the white world and mixing more easily, as well as more willingly, with whites. The first group of black teachers seemed to center their efforts around the defense of their own and the black students' pride, while the second group acknowledged the assaults to pride but went on to try to improve the teaching situation in a variety of ways. As all the black teachers faced pressure which was were similar to, but more intense than, the pressure on the white teachers from Atlantic, their responses were similar because of their race, shaped by their role as women, and varied according to their social background and previous experience with whites.

The Uses of the Faculty Subculture

I have suggested that the key to the subculture developed by the Mann faculty, especially by the white men who dominated it, was its usefulness in protecting the pride of the faculty both individually and collectively. The world was interpreted through a filter of meaning which allowed these teachers to preserve their sense that they were good teachers. That they could not show their good qualities, indeed that they would not even attempt new departures which might show them, was, through the logic of meaning which they developed, demonstration of their worth as teachers because their passivity made evident the impossible constraints under which they labored. Their behavior becomes coherent and more or less consistent if one considers the implications of their fundamental assumptions about the inability of teachers to control the conditions of their work or to perform well without good conditions.

In order to understand their culture more fully it may be helpful to go one layer deeper and to inquire why pride is so important to begin with. The answer lies in all the sources of this faculty culture described so far. First, pride, especially for males, is an important value in American culture over all. And competence at one's work, the source of pride which was at stake for these teachers, is an important part of social identity in American culture, again especially for males. For women, pride of craft may more often be subjectively rather than socially assessed (Biklen, 1985), and so the parents' and administrators' mistrust at Mann were less devastating than the students' unresponsiveness and hostility at Atlantic Avenue and less devastating than they were to the men, as they affected social reputation more than the work itself. For teachers of both sexes, because there are few rewards in either money or career advancement, the intrinsic rewards of the work itself take on more importance than they do for members of many other occupations (Lortie, 1975). Pride of craft is important among these.

Lacking response from students to establish pride of craft, teachers may look for respect from others to confirm it. The teachers at Atlantic were deprived of this reward either from their students or from the rest of the society which placed

upon them the stigma which it placed upon their students. At Mann upper middle class parents considered the teachers paid help to be corrected when they did not follow parents' expectations rather than professionals to be respected for their special expertise. These parents viewed the teachers doubly suspiciously because of their previous association with poor black students—even though most of the white teachers felt no kinship or identification with those students. The central administration and the building principals viewed them equally suspiciously because of their previous association with a school which had a bad academic and social reputation in the school system. These assaults had a somewhat different impact on black teachers, who could be expected to identify with the Atlantic students, than on the white teachers, but some of them also centered their response to the school around the maintenance of their own pride and that of the black students. The change from junior high school to middle school organization added an independent assault on the teachers' pride.

In short, both American culture in general and the occupational culture of teaching encouraged these teachers to focus their attention on the maintenance of their professional pride. In the particular circumstances in which they found themselves at Atlantic and at Mann their pride was subject to a stream of related and unrelated assaults. It was then not surprising that these teachers should together build a meaning system centered around collective maintenance of their threatened pride. They interpreted events and directed their behavior in terms of that meaning system. From an outsider's perspective their behavior was baffling and self-defeating as they entered a relationship of spiraling conflict with administrators and made little attempt to experiment with ways to develop enriched or accelerated or even imaginative educational experiences with their well-behaved and generally able—if not strictly gifted or talented—classes. But their behavior can be understood if one comprehends the subculture which supported it and made it both sensible and, in a limited sense, rewarding for the teachers.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CASE OF HORACE MANN FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTUR OF WORK GROUPS

The case of the faculty of Horace Mann stands as a reminder of the multiple sources of culture. Work groups in most organizations where there is a stable core of persons who have worked together over a reasonable amount of time can be expected to have developed a common subculture. The analysis here suggests that such cultures are rooted in the common experiences which such groups encounter on the job and by virtue of their identity as workers in the setting. But it suggests that one can not make a simple translation from the conditions of the job to the terms of a culture. Adult workers are already creatures of culture as they enter an organization, and they interpret their experiences on the job through a cultural filter. Therefore the culture which develops in work groups is literally a subculture, a culture developed within the terms of the wider societal culture, though possibly in opposition or tension with it. Furthermore, workers are part of other subcultures besides that which they develop on the job.

At Mann the values of teaching as an occupation and the relations of teachers as a work force to parents of differing social class and ethnicity and to

administrators affected the way in which the faculty as a work group responded to their common experiences. Furthermore, though the faculty all did more or less the same job, they did not all have the same experiences. The meaning of teaching at Atlantic varied significantly for white teachers and for black teachers, and they responded differently to it and developed distance as groups not only because of the divisions which separate the races in the society as a whole but because of their different relationships to the students. Similarly, there were more subtle, but still real, differences in the experiences of white men and white women especially at Mann where relationships with students became far less difficult, but where the teachers' role as bureaucratic subordinates was suddenly underscored. This subordination had more threatening implications for the men's cultural understanding of their status than for the women's. They responded with passive and active rebellion which only intensified the administrators' hierarchical pressures and deepened their resistance, while the women began to work toward more cooperative and mutually respectful relations with administrators as they did not need to resist or criticize them at every turn.

It is important, then, to look at the subcultural contexts from which workers come. Where they identify strongly with an occupation which transcends an organization (Smircich, 1983), the perspectives of this occupational culture may not only color but overwhelm the impact of experiences on the job. Where workers, or a significant portion of them, participate in a strongly defined common ethnic or community culture, they will inevitably carry its values into the workplace. Where ethnicity (or social class) is clearly visible to others, it will shape workers actual experiences and so shape the daily round to which worker subcultures are a response. The distinctive cultural outlooks taught to the two sexes can similarly be expected to affect their interpretations of their experiences on the job and their responses to them. Primarily male and primarily female work groups are also likely to be treated differently by other workers, and by clients, customers and supervisors; they may also experience different pay and different possibilities for promotion which will shape their outlooks in addition to the separate perspectives they bring to the job.

In short, this paper suggests that if we are to take seriously the current interest in organizational culture, we must expect that culture not to be monolithic. Work groups within an organization may or may not find the symbols, rituals, and cultural values which managers seek to promote in creating culture to make sense in terms of their daily experience. Further, they may interpret both that experience and cultural claims and shows designed by managers through the screen of a culture they have developed together. And as they bring to bear the cultural lenses they have acquired in being socialized to a gender, to an ethnic group, to a social class, and to an occupation they may hear and interpret the cultural messages of the organization in quite disparate ways. Both the alert sociological analyst and the wise manager will expect organizational cultures to be diverse and not to be easily subject to planful overhaul.

The recent literature on organizational culture calls into question the rational model of organizations and suggests that management is more like gardening than engineering (e.g. Peters and Waterman, 1982). Attention to naturally occurring subcultures within organizations reminds us that organizational gardens are not flat fields where everything can be plowed under and only seeds the gardener desires be

sewn. Rather management is like the tending of a plot upon uneven ground, dotted with boulders and large trees. One must respect and work with the lie of the land and the plants which naturally inhabit it.

ENDNOTES

1. Some enrichment was possible through long projects to be done at home which allowed students considerable room for individual initiative within a common theme—for example to write or artisitically design a project of any kind connected to the novel Tom Sawyer. Adult direction for them came primarily from parents. There was also enrichment in "exploratory classes" during the last period of each day. These could offer non-traditional subject matter and often involved more active participation by students than did other classes. But these classes were part of a middle school plan for all district schools mandated by the central office of the Heartland School District; they were not designed at Mann or distinctive to its program. Further, several teachers actively resisted departing from their accustomed subjects and methods to teach them.

2. Though such a move was considered every year; it did not occur until the fall of 1983 when the schools had been together five years.

3. Differences between the behavior of this faculty and the behavior of faculties of two other middle schools in the Heartland School District which there is not room to describe here (see Metz, 1983; forthcoming) also helped me to see the cultural sources of this faculty's behavior.

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